

Dear Judge Urias,

I write this letter on behalf of Lyron Woolridge. I do not write this letter as an assistant federal public defender but as a family friend who grew up with Lyron's mom, uncle, and grandparents. I watched this kid grow up from the time that he was born until his teenage years when he ran away from home-he was 14 years old. I never saw the kid again as I understand he left home and started living a transient lifestyle with little or no contact with his family. Lyron was a super small kid. He was lanky, shy, he was blind in one eye and seemed to always be hiding behind his older siblings. He was gentle and seemed to always be looking up to his mom, reaching his tiny little arms up in the air so that someone would pick him up. For the most part, he was raised by a single mom with 5 kids. His mom worked long hours and worked 2 or 3 jobs to make sure that her kids were bathed, clothed and fed.

Lyron didn't have a dad who was present in his life. His dad left the family when he was young. However, he was raised in a God-fearing family. His step-grandfather is a retired Pentecostal Bishop. He had his own church for over 25 years before retiring. Growing up, the family would come together every Sunday and go to services followed by lunch with the church's congregation. He was taught the importance of family values. He was raised to respect the law and stay away from drugs and alcohol. Unfortunately, he made some really bad decisions in his life, and he is once again before a judge facing a significant amount of time. Lyron's dad was a drug addict who spent time in and out of prison. Lyron's fate seems to be following his father's footsteps, however, it is not too late to change his direction. Lyron can be a law-abiding member of our community if he were to complete a long-term in-patient drug treatment program and get mental health counseling.

Lyron is young and he is angry. It is because he is young that we should not lock him up for any time that is greater than necessary. 11 years is stiff sentence for this kid. He is not yet institutionalized, however, I fear that an 11-year sentence will do exactly that. 11 years will do nothing more than punish him without keeping in mind a fair sentence that takes into account all of the factors of our system. He will be placed on supervised release upon his release, and he will work with a U.S. Probation Officer who can tailor his conditions of supervision that help this young man focus on being a better citizen, a better dad, and a better son. I know that his mama is worried about him. She realizes that he has committed a crime and he will have to serve a sentence. However, she doesn't see a criminal. She sees a sweet kid who loved school and loved camping.

I hope this Court can find a sentence that punishes him but a sentence that is less than the 11 years projected in his presentence report.

Kindest regards,



Dennis J. Candelaria